



THE INSTITUTE OF CONSERVATION

DEFRA: A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment Icon Statement

February 2018

The Institute of Conservation (Icon) supports the government's [25 Year Environment Plan](#), which sets out goals for improving the environment "within a generation."

It is encouraging to see many references to cultural heritage in the document and recognition of the symbiotic relationship between cultural and environmental conservation. We agree with DEFRA that measures to protect cultural and natural heritage are an "act of stewardship" driven by "moral imperatives."

The 25 Year Environment Plan is the latest in a sequence of government reports emphasizing the economic value of protecting heritage, following the publications of the Culture White Paper, Mendoza Review and Heritage Statement. We are thrilled to have this value reconfirmed and we hope it will inevitably increase support for conservation, allowing heritage to maximise its benefits to society.

Of the plan's goals and policies, we particularly applaud

- Enhanced beauty, heritage and engagement with the natural environment

Icon supports the aim to safeguard the natural environment while being sensitive to considerations of heritage. The natural environment is central to the meaning and value of its cultural heritage – and vice versa. Further, the threats of changing social and economic conditions are shared by both natural and cultural heritage assets.

Consequently, a joined-up approach to conservation that considers both types of heritage is important to enhancing and protecting the overall environment.

This demonstrates the value of a new Heritage Council, as proposed in the Heritage Statement in 2017. The DCMS-led council recognises the impact that policies from across government departments have on heritage and will promote collaboration between departments. Icon has expressed its willingness to collaborate on the Council by sharing its expertise in championing high standards of conservation.

- Protecting and improving our global environment

The report's commitment to protecting cultural and natural heritage around the world recognises the international reputation of the UK heritage sector. Our heritage organisations have the potential to share knowledge and promote best practice abroad through education, training and conservation programs.

The support of DCMS, the British Council and Arts Council is important to ensuring organisations are aware of opportunities and have the financial support to deliver this goal. In 2017, the British Council facilitated Icon's share of expertise on accreditation in cultural heritage conservation with Chinese partners.

If the UK's heritage organisations are to contribute to protecting and enhancing the wider global environment, skills gaps and shortages must be addressed to maintain the high quality the sector is known for. Icon urges the government and its arms-length bodies to support research on workforce skills gaps and to secure the sector's talent pipeline by encouraging the uptake of arts and technical subjects in education.

We look forward to working with partners across government and the conservation sector in realising the government's ambition of leaving the environment "in a better state than we found it."

Alison Richmond ACR FIIC
Chief Executive